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OFFICE OF PETITIONS

In re Application of:
Johnson :
Filed: 14 September, 2000 :
Application No. 09/662,195 :
Docket No.: (None/formerly: 2000200-0003) :

ON PETITION

This is a decision on the petition filed herein 16 July, 2002, under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b)¹ to revive the above-identified application as having been abandoned due to unintentional delay.

The petition under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) is **GRANTED**.

BACKGROUND

The record indicates that:

- Petitioner failed to reply timely and properly to the final Office action mailed on 12 August, 2002, with reply due (absent and extension of time) on or before Tuesday, 12 November, 2002;

¹ Effective December 1, 1997, the provisions of 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) now provide that where the delay in reply was unintentional, a petition may be filed to revive an abandoned application or a lapsed patent pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b). A grantable petition filed under the provisions of 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) must be accompanied by:

(1) the required reply, unless previously filed. In a nonprovisional application abandoned for failure to prosecute, the required reply may be met by the filing of a continuing application. In an application or patent, abandoned or lapsed for failure to pay the issue fee or any portion thereof, the required reply must be the payment of the issue fee or any outstanding balance thereof.
(2) the petition fee as set forth in 37 C.F.R. §1.17(m);
(3) a statement that the entire delay in filing the required reply from the due date for the reply until the filing of a grantable petition pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) was unintentional. The Commissioner may require additional information where there is a question whether the delay was unintentional; and
(4) any terminal disclaimer (and fee set forth in 37 C.F.R. §1.20(d)) required pursuant to 37 C.F.R. §1.137(c). (Emphasis supplied.)

- the application was deemed abandoned after midnight 12 November, 2002;
- no Notice of Abandonment was mailed before the instant petition was filed;
- in the original petition filed 5 May, 2003, Petitioner detailed the financial demise of the former assignee, Supercritical Combustion Corporation (formerly known as Quantum Energy Corporation), and resulting in: a Chapter 7 bankruptcy filing by the former assignee (U.S. Bankruptcy Court, D. Mass. Case No. 02-18821-WWC) on 9 December, 2002; an auction by the Trustee in bankruptcy on 13 February, 2003, of this application and other properties of the bankrupt assignee; and final receipt of the Bill of Sale from the Trustee by present assignee Nanocluster Technologies LLC on 11 April, 2003;
- Petitioner acknowledged that former assignee's then-Counsel's (Brenda Herschbach Jarrell (Reg. No. 39,233) docket records reflected the 12 August, 2002, final Office action was received by the then-Counsel. For those and other reasons set forth in the decision, the original petition was dismissed on 12 June 2003; and
- on 16 July, 2003, Petitioner filed the instant petition (with fee authorization), and Request for Continued Examination (RCE) under 37 C.F.R. §1.114,² with submission and fee, and made the statement of unintentional delay.

² The regulations at 37 C.F.R. §1.114 provide:

§ 1.114 Request for continued examination.

(a) If prosecution in an application is closed, an applicant may request continued examination of the application by filing a submission and the fee set forth in § 1.17(e) prior to the earliest of:

(1) Payment of the issue fee, unless a petition under § 1.313 is granted;

(2) Abandonment of the application; or

(3) The filing of a notice of appeal to the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Federal Circuit under 35 U.S.C. 141, or the commencement of a civil action under 35 U.S.C. 145 or 146, unless the appeal or civil action is terminated.

(b) Prosecution in an application is closed as used in this section means that the application is under appeal, or that the last Office action is a final action (§ 1.113), a notice of allowance (§ 1.311), or an action that otherwise closes prosecution in the application.

(c) A submission as used in this section includes, but is not limited to, an information disclosure statement, an amendment to the written description, claims, or drawings, new arguments, or new evidence in support of patentability. If reply to an Office action under 35 U.S.C. 132 is outstanding, the submission must meet the reply requirements of § 1.111.

(d) If an applicant timely files a submission and fee set forth in § 1.17(e), the Office will withdraw the finality of any Office action and the submission will be entered and considered. If an applicant files a request for continued examination under this section after appeal, but prior to a decision on the appeal, it will be treated as a request to withdraw the appeal and to reopen prosecution of the application before the examiner. An appeal brief under § 1.192 or a reply brief under § 1.193(b), or related papers, will not be considered a submission under this section.

(e) The provisions of this section do not apply to:

(1) A provisional application;

(2) An application for a utility or plant patent filed under 35 U.S.C. 111(a) before June 8, 1995;

(3) An international application filed under 35 U.S.C. 363 before June 8, 1995;

(4) An application for a design patent; or

(5) A patent under reexamination

STATUTES, REGULATIONS AND ANALYSIS

Congress has authorized the Commissioner to "revive an application if the delay is shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner to have been "unavoidable." 35 U.S.C. §133 (1994).³

The regulations at 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) and (b) set forth the requirements for a petitioner to revive a previously unavoidably or unintentionally, respectively, abandoned application under this congressional grant of authority. The language of 35 U.S.C. §133 and 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a) is clear, unambiguous, and without qualification: the delay in tendering the reply to the outstanding Office action, as well as filing the first petition seeking revival, must have been unavoidable for the reply now to be accepted on petition.⁴

Delays in responding properly raise the question whether delays are unavoidable.⁵ Where there is a question whether the delay was unavoidable, Petitioners must meet the burden of establishing that the delay was unavoidable within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. §133 and 37 C.F.R. §1.137(a).⁶ And the Petitioner must be diligent in attending to the matter.⁷

(Moreover, it long has been the position of the Office that the use of the filing periods (such as in 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b)) as an "extension of time" is an "abuse" of the procedures for reviving abandoned applications, and is contrary to the meaning and intent of the regulation.⁸ The Office has indicated that petitions to revive must be filed promptly after the applicant becomes aware of the abandonment.⁹ Such does not constitute the care required under Pratt, and so cannot satisfy

³ 35 U.S.C. §133 provides:

35 U.S.C. §133 Time for prosecuting application.

Upon failure of the applicant to prosecute the application within six months after any action therein, of which notice has been given or mailed to the applicant, or within such shorter time, not less than thirty days, as fixed by the Commissioner in such action, the application shall be regarded as abandoned by the parties thereto, unless it be shown to the satisfaction of the Commissioner that such delay was unavoidable.

⁴ Therefore, by example, an unavoidable delay in the payment of the Filing Fee might occur if a reply is shipped by the US Postal Service, but due to catastrophic accident, the delivery is not made.

⁵ See: *Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure; Final Rule Notice*, 62 Fed. Reg. at 53158-59 (October 10, 1997), 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office at 86-87 (October 21, 1997).

⁶ See: In re Application of G, 11 USPQ2d 1378, 1380 (Comm'r Pats. 1989).

⁷ See: Diligence in Filing Petitions to Revive and Petitions to Withdraw the Holding of Abandonment, 1124 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office 33 (March 19, 1991). It was and is Petitioner's burden to exercise diligence in seeking either to have the holding of abandonment withdrawn or the application revived. See 1124 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office supra.

⁸ See: In re Application of S, 8 USPQ2d 1630, 1632 (Comm'r Pats. 1988). Where there is a question whether the delay was unintentional, the petitioner must meet a burden of establishing that the delay was unintentional within the meaning of 35 U.S.C. § 41(a)(7) and 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b). See: In re Application of G, 11 USPQ2d 1378, 1380 (Comm'r Pats. 1989).

⁹ See: Diligence in Filing Petitions to Revive and Petitions to Withdraw the Holding of Abandonment, 1124 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office 33 (March 19, 1991). It was and is Petitioner's burden to exercise diligence in seeking either to have the holding of abandonment withdrawn or the application revived. See 1124 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office supra.

the test for diligence and due care.

(By contrast, unintentional delays are those that do not satisfy the very strict statutory and regulatory requirements of unavoidable delay, and also, by definition, are not intentional.¹⁰)

Petitioner has filed the petition (with fee), made the statement of unintentional delay and submitted the required replies (RCE, submission, fee).

The record (including the petitions filed on 5 May and 16 July, 2003), does not necessitate a finding that the delay between midnight 12 November, 2002, and the filing of a grantable petition, was not unintentional.

Rather, the Patent and Trademark Office is relying in this matter on Petitioner's (Eugene Berman, Reg. No. 22,587) duty of candor and good faith in accepting Petitioner's representation that the delay in filing the response was unintentional.¹¹

Petitioner has satisfied the "fee," "statement," and "reply" requirements under the regulations.

CONCLUSION

Accordingly, the petition to revive under 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) hereby is **granted**.

This application is being forwarded to Technology Center 1600 to for further processing in due course.

Telephone inquiries concerning this decision may be directed to the undersigned at (703) 305-9199.



John J. Gillon, Jr.
Senior Attorney
Office of Petitions

¹⁰ Therefore, by example, an unintentional delay in the reply might occur if the reply and transmittal form are to be prepared for shipment by the US Postal Service, but other pressing matters distract one's attention and the mail is not timely deposited for shipment.

¹¹ See Changes to Patent Practice and Procedure, 62 Fed. Reg. at 53160 and 53178, 1203 Off. Gaz. Pat. Office at 88 and 103 (responses to comments 64 and 109)(applicant obligated under 37 C.F.R. §10.18 to inquire into the underlying facts and circumstances when providing the statement required by 37 C.F.R. §1.137(b) to the Patent and Trademark Office).